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WENCKE SOUGHT JOB IN CIA IN 1979, DOCUMENT REVEALS

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Fugitive financier Walter Wencke may have asked the U.S. government to provide him the best of all hiding places — within the Central Intelligence Agency.

During a hearing yesterday to determine if Catheryn Wencke should be held in contempt for concealing information about her former husband, a counsel for the Securities and Exchange Commission revealed that a letter bearing Wencke's name had been prepared for the CIA's personnel department.

The SEC's Ernest T. Kaufmann said he could not tell how he obtained the document.

In the unsigned letter, Wencke said he didn't believe the CIA had anyone with his "unique combination of business and language expertise."

Wencke was reportedly a military intelligence specialist during and after World War II. In his letter he claimed to have been trained by the Army in Chinese and Japanese, and said he could also speak Russian, French, Spanish and German.

"My primary business was the investigation and acquisition of financially troubled companies," Wencke wrote, explaining how he could walk through a manufacturing plant and assess its production.

Wencke's letter said he was enclosing a newspaper article describing his troubles with federal law-enforcement agencies.

He said he expected to be a "guest" at the federal prison in Lumpoc as a result of those troubles and, rather than spending 20 months "playing tennis or playing cards, I would prefer to spend it productively utilizing my knowledge for the benefit of the government."

"In other words, I want to use my time and energy for the government rather than sit idle at its expense."

Wencke has been accused of acquiring financially troubled companies with the intent of looting them.

During his heyday in the late 1960s, he assembled a financial empire of dozens of companies, hotels in five states and thousands of acres of California farmland.

He was convicted of securities fraud and has been missing since Oct. 9, when he was to surrender to begin serving his term. Kaufmann said Wencke transferred \$25,000 to banks in the Bahamas shortly before he vanished.

Wencke's former wife has been accused of failing to divulge all she knows about his tangled affairs and of failing to turn over all documents to his receiver, Robert Gould.

Yesterday, she first denied typing any letter for her husband in 1979 in which he sought employment.

But when Kaufmann produced the letter, she said, "It seems he contacted the federal government or somebody."

Then she recalled that maybe he had contacted the CIA. Still later she said she did remember typing a letter to the CIA.

Mrs. Wencke said she didn't know if the government responded.

U.S. Magistrate Harry R. McCue commented that Mrs. Wencke seemed to have difficulty recalling events until she learned that documents were to be produced.

"She had a miraculous recovery of her memory when she knew you had that letter," McCue said to Kaufmann.

McCue strongly urged Mrs. Wencke to try to remember events such as the letter to the CIA, noting that anything that could have kept her husband from going to prison probably would have made a vivid impression on her.

Wencke's letter to the CIA said, "Why don't you give me a call and let me know what I can do for you?"

"That can be characterized, generously as a rather bizarre proposal," McCue said.